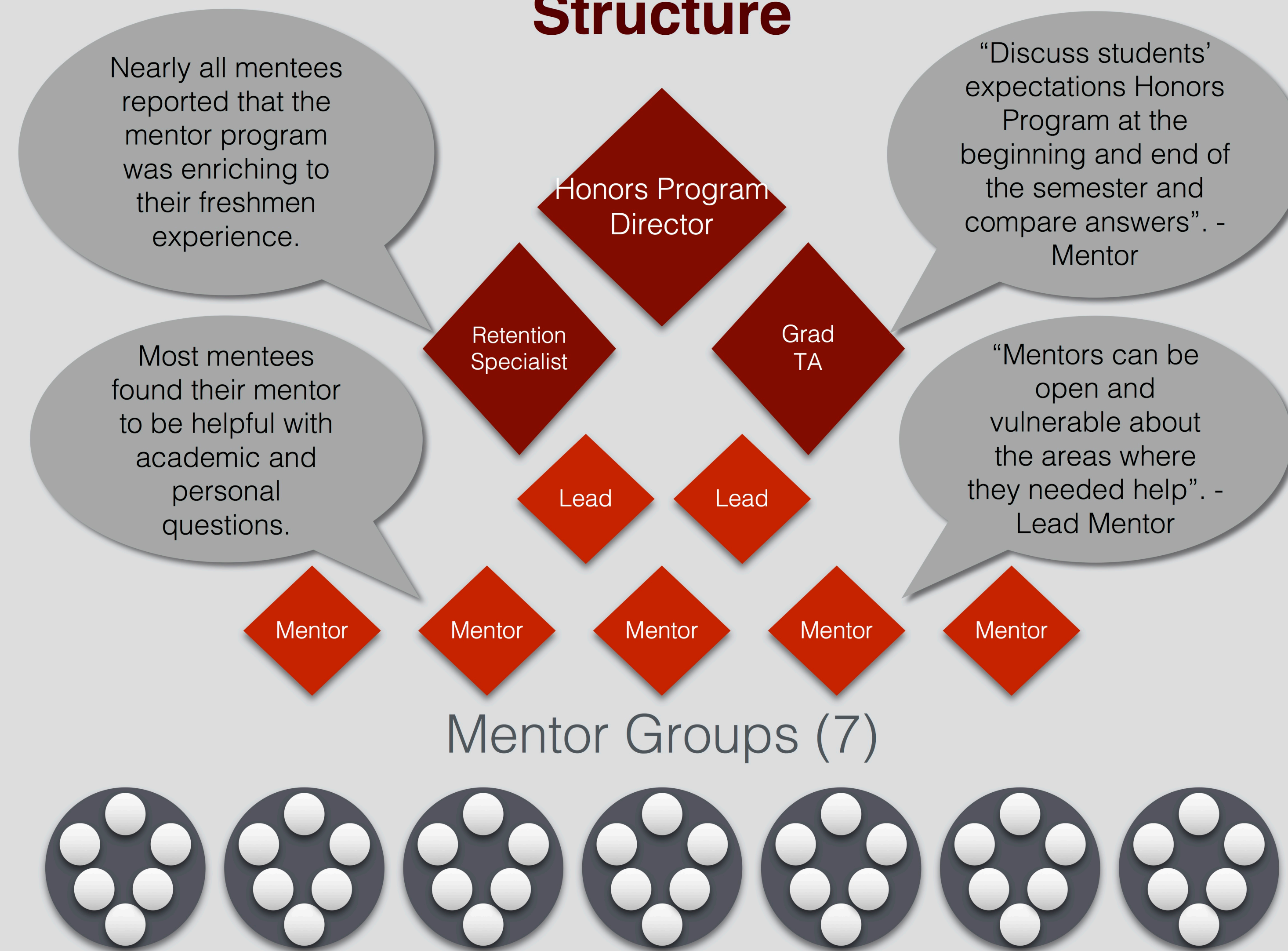


Creating and Implementing a Peer Mentoring Program in a College of Agriculture

Dr. Leslie Edgar* and Isabel Whitehead
University of Arkansas



Bumpers Honors Peer Mentor Program Structure



The Honors Program Director and the Graduate TA for the Bumpers Honors Perspectives course collaborated with a retention specialist from the Honors College to create the program structure

2 Lead Mentors (Juniors or Seniors)
5 Mentors (Sophomores or Juniors)

Each peer mentor group consisted of 5 to 6 students. Research shows that a low mentor to mentee ratio better facilitates relationship building.

Why Peer Mentor Programs?

As students enter college, they must adapt to a new, often less structured environment than their previous educational experiences.

Trends in education suggest peer mentoring programs act as an effective mechanism to increase student engagement and participation, and provide targeted support.

Theoretical Support

Astin's Theory of Student Involvement stresses the use of dynamic learning tools to increase student motivation. Student Involvement Theory shifts the educator into a role of facilitator to ultimately engage students to participate by choice.

Creation

Peer mentoring experiences are typically characterized as **extra-curricular**.

The Bumpers Honors Peer Mentor Program was created to provide **intra-curricular and extra curricular** support for incoming honors students

Implementation

Student mentors were selected through an application and interview process, provided with leadership and relationship skill training prior to integrating into the classroom.

Freshmen students informally reported feeling more connected to their classmates. Peer mentors described the challenges of engaging students, facilitating discussions, and managing diverse personalities.